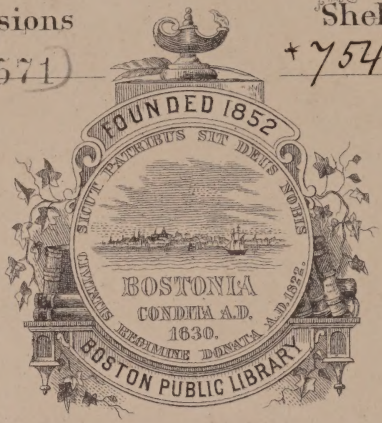
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 08631 188 1

4975

Accessions
25571
Shelf No.
*7541.189


Received AUG 20 1891

SERMON,

PREACHED IN WARE VILLAGE, MASS.,

APRIL 12, 1835,

BY PARSONS COOKE,

ON OCCASION OF HIS TAKING LEAVE OF THE CHURCH AND PEOPLE IN THAT PLACE.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

MR. COOKE'S FAREWELL SERMON.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN WARE VILLAGE, MASS.,

APRIL 12, 1835,

BY PARSONS COOKE,

ON OCCASION OF HIS TAKING LEAVE OF THE CHURCH AND PEOPLE IN THAT PLACE.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

BOSTON:
WILLIAM PEIRCE, NO. 9, CORNHILL.
1835.

BA
(25571)
aug. 20, 1891

BOSTON:
Webster & Southard, Printers,
No. 9, Cornhill.

SERMON.

ACTS XX. 32.

"And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

These words were addressed by Paul to the elders of the church at Ephesus. On his way to Jerusalem, though he would not visit Ephesus, the scene of his former labors, he sent and procured a farewell interview with the elders, and representatives of the church. And that interview gave occassion for the impressive discourse which we have in this chapter. He appeals to their recollections, after what manner he had been with them at all seasons — how he had kept back nothing that was profitable, and insisted upon repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. He declared how his mind had risen above the fear of the afflictions, and persecutions which he knew were in reserve for him; intent only upon finishing his course with joy. He calls them to witness, that he is pure from the blood of all men, not having shunned to declare all the counsel of God. He charges them to take heed to themselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, warning them to expect that wolves would enter in among them, and that some even of their own number would assume that character. This warning to watch, he enforces by calling them to remember, that for the space of three years he had ceased not to warn every man, night and day with tears. He then in the words of the text commends them to God and the word of his grace, and reminds them that he had coveted no mans silver or gold, but had been to them an example of beneficence, showing that it was more blessed to give than to receive. Here are the outlines of such a farewell discourse,

as few ministers would be warranted to preach, if they had the eloquence to frame it. But the words of the text, I can most heartily adopt on this occasion of deep and affecting interest. If I cannot say that I am pure from the blood of all men, — that I have kept back nothing that was profitable — that I have coveted no mans silver or gold — however many imperfections in these and other particulars may have marred my ministry, I can heartily and truely adopt this part of the apostles farewell discourse, and sincerely commend you to God and the word of his grace, This I shall attempt to do, by unfolding and enforcing upon your minds the sentiment of the text. The idea of the text would have been more plain to the English reader if it had been rendered ; I commend you to God and the word of his grace, even to him who is able to build you up. It is *God* and not the *word* of grace which is able to build up, and give an inheritence. The grammatical construction will indeed admit of either rendering ; but the idea of doctrines or writings being able to give an inheritance, seems harsh and unnatural. We may then understand the sentiment of the text, something in this form — Paul as he was about to withdraw forever, and transfer to other fields of labor, those instrumentalities which he had so long employed among the Ephesians, uses the occasion to impress their minds more deeply with a sense of dependence upon God, and to throw them upon resources which lie back of all instrumentalities, and give them to understand, that though they should see his face no more, nor enjoy his minstrations more, yet God and the word of his grace remained the same. And they were exhorted to look away from him who had been the cherished instrument of good to them, up to the unchanging source of all good, — to God and the word of his grace — to God and his grace, as pledged in his word. This then is in brief the sentiment on which I now purpose to dwell. *That God as set forth in his gracious word, is the proper, only and sufficient ground of reliance, for a church in all her exigencies, and especially in the event of a change of pastors.*

And I would fain make use of the peculiar interest which naturally gathers around this day of our separation, to fasten this sentiment upon your hearts. In this sentiment, all the principles which I have labored to inculcate during nine years of ministerial labor among you, have a point of convergence. And in it I find repose to my own mind, from all that burden of solicitude which is wont to intrude upon me, when I think of laying off the responsibilities connected with my pastoral office in this place. I am far from having participated in those fears of evil to this church resulting from my separa-

tion from it which some have expressed — still I have looked upon it as possible that the event might lead the way to others of a serious nature, though the probabilities are against it. And this possibility of evil, connecting itself in a variety of ways with the step which I have taken, has awoke some anxieties in my mind. But all these anxieties have their antidote in the word of God's grace. Paul when leaving the Ephesian church absolutely knew, that after his departure grievous wolves would enter in, not sparing the flock, and that of their own selves men would arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them, and yet after faithfully warning them to guard the avenues of harm, he turns over the burden of his solicitude upon God, bids them stay themselves on the word of his grace. To my own feelings, it is a great relief to think that the charge, the burden and responsibilities which have been committed to me as your pastor are not to be thrown loose upon the winds, but given back to him who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and holds the stars in his right hand. And that all the love and grace and power of God which have guided the elements of your prosperity, while I have been with you, are to remain the same after my separation from you. That the loss you are to incur is but a mere circumstance, compared with the abiding elements of good which remain. One earthen vessel is to be changed for another, but the deposite of divine love and power which God has chosen to put in earthen vessels for the benefit of his church, is still to be in your possession. Here is the point of rest for my own mind, in this hour of separation, and here I invite your solicitudes to repose.

In unfolding the sentiment of the text, I shall speak in the first place of some of the ways, in which the resources of God and the gospel of his grace are applicable to your exigencies, and secondly of some things needful in order to secure, on your behalf, these resources.

In the first place your exigencies are met by those resources, to which I now commend you in their being *unfailing and unchanging*. All the ties and relations of this world, are brittle and transient. But in him from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift to the church, is neither variableness nor shadow of turning. For no fault of yours, and much against your wishes, a pastor may be taken from you, but not so with God and the word of his grace. That remains the same through all changes, except that of your own guilty declension. This love and interest of God on your behalf, so far from abating in seasons of bereavement and affliction in regard to external conditions, is often by such means brought nearer, in more

affecting manifestations. But Zion said the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget yet will I not forget thee, I have graven thee on the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me. This passage wherein infinite tenderness breaks forth upon the church, is a part of that word of grace to which you are commended. When the Redeemer of the world forgets that cause in which he laid down his life, and in which he is spending eternal wisdom love and power, and to which he has made tributary all the influences of universal being, then, and not till then, will he forget in great or small his love for the church, which he has purchased with his own blood. His love may show itself even in your bereavement and chastisement. Rebukes from him are often tokens of fatherly kindness. For a small moment I hid my face from thee, but with everlasting kindness have I drawn thee. Contemplate then the enduring nature of your main resources. Paul who has planted, and Apollos who has watered, and the minister by whom ye believed, and from whose hand ye have taken the bread of life — for whom ye have daily prayed that he may be made to you an instrument of great and lasting good, has given you to understand that you shall see his face no more, but God and the word of his grace remain. The same unfailing love for his church may flow down through other channels. The same holy spirit remains to give effect to the gospel dispensed by other ambassadors. The same principles of divine mercy, the same great and precious promises, the same encouragements, consolations and grounds of hope abide with you. The same mercy seat welcomes your access, and the same God over all is rich unto all that call upon him still. Should your hopes and dependance in men be disappointed — nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal — The Lord knoweth them that are his. God's love and beneficence to his church, took its beginning back in the abyss of eternal years, and will flow, unchecked by any disruption of mortal ties.

Again, these divine resources are suited to your exigencies because you have no danger of incurring the loss of them, by putting too much dependence upon them. A pastor may be too much the object of affection and dependence. You may be placing a reliance on a miserable, sinful worm of the dust, which belongs only to God. And that your idol may not prove your ruin, God may see fit to take him from you. Of nothing is God more jealous than of the rivalry of an idol. And if that idol be a man whom in days gone, he has

honored as the bearer of spiritual blessings to your souls, so much the worse — so much the greater the perversion. And your own good in such a case requires, that this trust in man be cured. For it is both written on the records of heaven, and indicated in the very structure of the human soul, and illustrated in all parts of the plan of redemption, and exemplified in all the outgoings of salvation, to the church — That cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the Lord, for he shall be as the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh. But in God and the word of his grace, the trust cannot be excessive. And no danger is incurred by its intensest exercises. The soul that has the deepest, and most real conviction of the need and adequacy of divine resources, will be least injured by any change in outward affairs. It has by faith an anchor-hold from which no adverse events can drive it.

> "His hand the good man fastens on the skies,
> And bids earth roll, nor heeds her idle whirl."

Another thought to be here noticed is that the divine resources of which the church is invited to avail herself, are so brought out as to expose the littleness, and the intrinsic impotence of all human instruments in the work of salvation, and thus to lead to proper grounds of rest in the loss of this or that instrument. With what scrupulous care did the Apostle Paul guard his spiritual children against attaching too much importance to himself as God's minister. I have planted, and Apollos watered, but God has given the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither is he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. Who then is Paul or who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed? He would have them believe that both Paul and Apollos, were but a mere circumstance, a mere speck, and nothing in the account. Thus did he love to shrink to nothing before the majesty and the all-sufficiency of the Holy Ghost. But in this self annihilation, he brought out a great, and never to be forgotten truth. And it is a truth to which I have labored to give great prominence, in the whole course of my ministrations among you. Now let this truth come to a bearing upon the case in hand. However much importance we may attach to this or that one of God's ministers, in his account they are nothing, and to us they are nothing, only so far as he sees fit to make them blessings to us. The plain inference then is, that the removal of this or that one from us, takes nought from God's power to confer blessings upon us. All the influences of his grace indeed flow down to us through appropriate channels of his own

choosing. But secure his kindness and love, by living near to him, and by generous obedience to his commands, and the blessings of his grace will not fail to reach you for want of a suitable bearer. They will come with force and fullness sufficient to cut their own channels. When we look back to seasons of our former prosperity, and the trophies of grace secured in days of revival, to whom do we impute the result. Every heart spontaneously utters itself in — Not unto us, oh Lord, not unto us but unto thy name, we give glory. Human instruments then confess their nothingness; and in that confession the truth comes out, that what God has done with the help of a mere nothing, the same he can do again by the help of some other nothing. God forbid that I should say a word which should have influence to inspire a carelessness as to the character and qualifications of your future pastor. I wish only to do homage to the grace of God; and lead you to feel that the excellency of the power is so of God that none of the sources of spiritual prosperity are closed in my removal from you. While it is true that neither is he that planteth anything neither is he that watereth, it is yet essensential, according to the economy of God's grace, that you should secure the ministrations of one, who will diligently and skilfully and prayerfully plant and water.

Again I may commend you to God and the resources pledged in the word of his grace, for guidance in an affair of so much importance as that of the selection of a pastor. There is a satisfaction in believing that God's providence superintends all the causes, that converge to form the connection between a pastor and people in a given cause. And that if his guidance be sought by humble believing prayer and dependence, it will not be sought in vain. The burning and the shining lights in God's church, are under his control — he holds the stars in his right hand. And it depends on him to say what light he will place in this candle-stick. In Scripture phrase, pastors are called God's gifts. The Apostle in allusion to Christ's ascending up on high, and receiving gifts for men, to prepare the way for the Lord's dwelling among them, says; And he gave some prophets and some apostles and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. The idea of his ministers being his gifts, to the church is carried through the passage. Let this idea be taken up, and carried through all your enquiries and measures for securing a pastor. Address yourselves to the enterprise, as if seeking a gift from God — encouraging yourselves in the belief, that he is able in dispensing this gift to meet all your wants. In this way the wisdom of God may be brought to a bearing, and made to con-

trol your choice. There is in every church a great variety of tastes and views. And it is easy to see, that the harmonizing of all this variety, and concentrating the action of the whole in one course, and that a right course, is an affair too great for any but Him who has all hearts in his hand, and turns them as the rivers of water are turned. So then when the difficulty of securing such a pastor as you need, urges itself upon your mind, look to God and the word of his grace. He in this as well as in all other particulars is all-sufficient. Every shaft in his quiver is wrought and polished by his hand.

> "God gives to every man, the understanding, virtue, temper, taste
> That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
> Just in the niche he was ordained to fill."

His providence and all pervading influence, may bring you the man and incline all hearts to receive him.

And then upon another, no less essential point, God's resources come to a bearing. It rests with him, to determine whether the man of your choice shall be a blessing or a curse. Great unanimity and even enthusiasm, pervaded the minds of the whole nation of Israel in the choice of Saul as their king. But little did they know that they were choosing the lash of scorpions for their own backs. And it is a consolation to know, that God's grace is competent to prevent you from making such a choice, and reaping such fruits of it. He holds the stars in his right hand. He can be with his ministers always. He superintends the furnishing of all their endowments. By positive or negative influence, he controls the course of their actions. He fills them with his Spirit, or suspends the flow of its influence upon them. There is, then, a rich propriety in your being commended to him, in relation to the whole concern of your future pastor, and also in your commending this concern to him, with a thorough sense of your dependence on him, and of his ability to do for you exceeding abundantly more than you can ask.

Again, to God and the word of his grace I may also appropriately commend you, for a defence in those dangers which generally naturally connect themselves, with the time of your destitution of a pastor. The elements of society are everywhere in motion and commotion. Disturbing causes are in busy action. So great is the predisposition of the world of mind for excitement, that it requires but a spark to raise a conflagration. And every community of mind is tinder to every spark. In such a state of things it is peculiarly undesirable for a church to have its organizations and settled habits

disturbed. The dismission of a pastor may prove a signal for bringing into action elements of strife, that had slumbered before, and bringing to a bearing dangers within and without. And here has been the ground of my most serious misgiving, in forming the determination to be separated from you. Your external condition was prosperous — and for aught that appeared might continue so. No discoverable cause appeared to throw difficulties in the way of your speedy union in the choice of another pastor. Yet no human foresight, could reveal what malign influences might be brought to bear upon you before that choice should take place, nor how long you would remain in this condition of peculiar exposure. Here is the spot around which my intensest anxieties have gathered. But this matter of anxious interest also, I have the satisfaction of referring to God and the word of his grace — to God who has gathered great renown in ages past, in carrying his church by a mighty hand through all her dangers — carrying her unhurt through floods and flames. I refer back to ancient days, and see the church pictured forth as a bush in the midst of a flame, yet unconsumed. I read of the protection given to the defenceless tribes hemmed in between the raging powers of Egypt and the Red Sea. And then I read onward, and find that this is but the beginning of a long and luminous train of instances, reaching down to the present hour, in which the church, beset with dangers, has found her God a wall of fire round about her, and in the midst of her a glory, and has found occasion to erect memorials of victory and inscribe upon it Jehovah-nissi; The Lord my banner. I look to the foundations on which the security of the church is placed. And I read that they which trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed. That as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about his people from henceforth even forever. Yea I hear the challenge issuing from her king, on his return from fresh triumphs over the ships of Tarshish and over kings and armies gathered for her overthrow. Walk about Zion, go round about her, tell ye the towers thereof, mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces — God is known in her palaces for a refuge. Then comes the voice of prophetic promise, No weapon formed against thee, shall prosper and every tongue that shall rise in judgment against thee thou shalt condemn. And where now are my fears? I lay the burden of them upon the promise and faithfulness of God, and take in the assurance that while ye abide in God, and his word abides in you, every danger is held in check. Mischief may be plotted against you, endeavors may be formed to take advantage of your seeming

exposed and defenceless condition, but you have only to open the eye of faith to discover invisible but invincible hosts, engaged for your defence, like the mountain full of chariots and horses round about Elijah. No, my brethren, I have not a fear that any of your interests will be injured, unless you let the injury in upon yourselves by your own misdoings. The abettors of error and the enemies of religion, with Satan at their head, cannot harm you, unless you first harm yourselves by a departure from the living God.

But I need not go into further particulars under this head. It is sufficient to say, that when we commend you to God, we commend you to one who is all-sufficient, and invite you to avail yourself of all God's fullness. What a majesty is there in the thought! all the fullness of God! God has in his nature resources ample and fit to meet all his own occasions, and much more, to meet all the occasions of his church. Whatever may be your present wants, or your future fortunes, lift your souls to God and let his fullness, portioned out by his wisdom satisfy every desire.

This train of remark thus far, very naturally shapes itself upon a review of the history of my connection with this church, and of God's dealings with us during that connection. This church was organized nine years ago this day, and my pastoral connection was formed with it soon after. And into that nine years have been crowded many events, which give a touching illustration of the sentiments I have here advanced. Providence placed me here young, inexperienced and inadequately furnished, to hold a place then of great difficulty, and responsibility, amid a flood of opposing elements. With weakness and fear and much trembling, I assumed the post, not daring to expect to hold it long. Yet in numerous instances, God has made use of my weakness, to set off the lustre of his grace. Scarce had I begun my pastoral labors, and that in a manner so imperfect that I blush in the recollection of them, when indications of the special presence of the Holy Ghost were seen. Then commenced and progressed a revival, which opened a new era in our history, and put a new aspect upon the religious state of things in this village. But during the progress of this work of grace, how inadequate, and how tame were the exhibitions of gospel truth, with which God saw fit to connect such results. From all the records I could gather, and all the recollections I can make of my labors in that revival, I can see nothing which on principles of human calculation would have warranted any expectation of such a harvest. And something of the same experience has characterized the revivals which have succeeded that. All the prosperous

scenes and events of my ministry here contribute to deepen the impression, that the desired result is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. That of him, and through him, and to him are all things. And abundant is the occasion which I have, in retiring from this field of labor, where I have reaped the first fruits of my ministry, where I have beheld rich displays of converting grace, and where I have passed through scenes, whose remembrance will be fondly cherished till my dying day, and as I trust revived again in brighter worlds, and recounted in celestial songs — abundant, I say, is the occasion which I have, to leave behind me in retiring, my most solemn record that our prosperity and success has been all of God. Let human instrumentalities dwindle, and be forgotten, while the remembrance of what God has done is cherished to the praise of the glory of his grace.

I come now in the second place to speak as was proposed, of some things needful in order to secure your interest in God and the word of his grace. Though there are ample resources treasured in God, to meet all your occasions, your enjoyment of them is not a matter of course, coming without care of yours. It is none of the privileges of the church of God to experience divine protection in a course of disregard of God's institutions and commands. A profession of religion, and the name of the church, carries with it no force to bring God's favor down upon those who have the form of godliness, while they deny the power thereof. The Bible and history are replete with instances of his visitations of displeasure upon a backsliding and covenant-breaking church. In proportion as you lose the character suited to the church of God do you lose your interest in the promises of God, and the word of his grace. There would be a strange incongruity in God's word of grace, if such promises as these — No weapon formed against thee shall prosper — I will never leave nor forsake thee — I will never forget thee, were to be understood as addressed to every branch of the visible church, while in a state of deep declension, or virtual apostacy. Such methods of grace would go to root Christianity out of the world. Nay, God's very covenant of grace provides, that when his church depart from him he will visit their sins with the rod, and their iniquities with stripes, and then look at what he actually has done in ancient days, to unworthy branches or generations of his church. While the spirit of the promise was ever kept, that no weapon formed against his people should prosper, a large part of the history of ancient Israel is occupied in detailing their disastrous defeats. Now the Phillistine comes up and overspreads the land in

its length and breadth. Now the Assyrian brings his power, his threatenings and his insults to the very walls of Jerusalem. Now Egypt comes up for victory, and plunder. And at last the Chaldean comes, and sweeps king and people all before him, and gives back the land that once flowed with milk and honey, the land with its vineyards and its cities all to the wild beasts of the desert. And those events are left on record to teach us how God treats his covenant people, when they become covenant-breakers. And all subsequent experience of that church runs in the same line. Indeed God distinctly declares, that there is a woe for them that are at ease in Zion. And all to show that the enclosures of Zion furnish no protection to those who are not true to his covenant.

While then, we commend you, my brethren, to God and the word of his grace, and tell what God is able to do for you, and what sufficient resources are in him to meet all your occasions, we must not encourage a vain confidence, by omitting to speak of the conditions on which all these blessings are suspended. When the Apostle referred the Ephesian elders to these resources, he dropped a hint as to the means of obtaining them by adding — "and the word of his grace," as if he had said, I commend you to God for all your needed supplies, and to the word of his grace for directions how to obtain them. God's gracious word at once reveals to us his fullness, and teaches us how to receive of his fullness. We shall then very properly occupy ourselves in drawing from the word of his grace, instruction as to the means of securing the blessings of which we have spoken. But here a broad field opens before us. Should I here gather into one discourse, all the instructions as to Christian duty which I have presented in the whole course of my ministry: Nay, should I lay out before you an expanded commentary upon the whole Bible, I should not exhaust the theme. I can only select some few topics which seem more especially appropriate to the present occasion.

In the first place, if you would secure these blessings you must *duly honor the word of God*, which is his appointed channel of communicating them. God's church is to be sanctified through the truth. The treasures of God's grace spend themselves upon the mind through the action of some of the principles of the revealed word. Religious prosperity in communities or in individuals, consists much in an effectual and prosperous study of the word of God. It is worth your while to notice how all your growth in grace, how all the striking passages in your religious history and experience, stand connected with some applications of the word of God. God

has magnified his word above all his name, i. e. above all other means of communicating himself. And if you wish to enjoy the communications from himself, you must bring the word of God to a full and steady action upon you.

And in order to this you must first of all labor to extend your acquaintance with the contents of the Bible, and your personal experience of its worth. They who constantly and thoroughly read the sacred Scriptures, in order to become more wise unto salvation, in order to lay broader the foundations of their religious character, and in order to feed and nourish their spirits with the elements of divine life, are in the way to secure the proper ends of a revelation from God, and to draw from their own experience adequate motives to sustain its institutions and its influence over the community. From the wants and the experience of their own minds, they are taught, that the interests of religion in any community, must flourish or decay much in proportion as the word of God is brought to bear upon the public mind. Would you then prepare the way for broad and lasting prosperity here, furnish yourselves individually to be instrumental in advancing that prosperity, by careful diligence, to be ever increasing in the knowledge of the word of God. And having thus qualified yourselves, let no labor or sacrifice of yours be wanting, to extend the influence of gospel truth over all minds in this community — remembering that the word of God's grace is the medium, through which God imparts himself and his fullness of grace.

The *Sabbath school* has ever been among the leading means of extending the knowledge of the Scriptures among both the old and young, and how vitally essential it has been to the prosperity of this society, you would soon learn if it were to be discontinued. To those who have taken a deep interest in its concerns, and have by your sacrifices, labors and prayers, contributed to that degree of prosperity which it has experienced, I need not say a word to urge you to continue and increase your devotedness to this department of duty. And if there are any others, who are solicitous for the welfare of Zion here, let them no longer undervalue a department in which has been treasured so many elements of her good. But as this is not the time to enlarge on this topic, I will simply invite you to call to mind the obligations under which you as a people, are to this one institution — to recollect to how many interesting scenes it has given birth — how much instruction and edification it has brought to Christian minds — what it has done towards training the church to action — what instrumentalities have gone from it

towards the conversion of sinners — what it has done to bring your children under the influence of divine truth and of God's government — and how many immortal minds will have immortal occasions to bless God for light and impressions received in connection with this Sabbath school. Gather, up, I say unto one thought, all the good which has come to you through this channel and then let me lodge the appeal with every friend of Zion, whether this department of Zion's strength shall be suffered to decline, or whether it shall be sustained to a steady advance. To such an appeal, who of you will not respond — If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning, If I do not remember thee let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth? The time is at hand when I shall be separated at a distance from you, in body not in spirit, and when reports of your continued and advancing welfare will be heard with great interest — will come like cold water to a thirsty soul. And in those hours I shall feel a great desire to be informed that this Sabbath school, which has invariably presented one of the most cheering and animating views of my field of labor, continues to enjoy the smiles of Heaven, and the united interest, prayers and energetic labors of the friends of Zion. This institution is, so to speak, one of your doors of access to the treasures in God's word. Let this door be kept open; fling its portals wide, and multiply the glad recipients of the blessing.

Another of the ways in which you must honor the word of God, if you would effectually draw from its treasures, is by sustaining and honoring the ministry of the word. I need not occupy the time, of which I have none to spare, in particularly setting forth the importance of an efficient ministry. Ye need not be told that all Christian institutions, and all uses and influences of God's word, are wont to go to decay, where the preaching of the gospel is discontinued. And by parity of reason, any degree of decline, in the influence of the pulpit, and of the interest that gathers around the pulpit, is proportionably to be deprecated. While God has chosen to save men by what his enemies call the foolishness of preaching, it is no part of his plan to prefer foolish preaching. And though there is great danger of attaching an undue importance to talents, and mere intellectual accomplishments in the ministry, you may be sure God is not honored or pleased, with that policy which, under pretence of homage to the power and grace of God, but really to save expense, would prefer to fill the pulpit with a driveler or a drone, or one whose talents and energies of body and mind are exhausted upon a farm, or in other worldly occupations. No, my

brethren, let it be a settled principle with you, that the interest and efficiency of the pulpit, shall be well sustained, whatever sacrifices it may cost you. Some of you, by reason of the uncertainty, as to the time of your continuance here, may feel less interest in this subject than you otherwise would. But it must not be overlooked that though you may have less *personal* interest, there is, on that very account, the more reason that out of regard to the general welfare of Zion, you should use the influence you have, to see that this important post is well sustained. An efficient ministry is more needed here than in other communities of equal importance, where the population is subject to fewer changes. For here is an interesting multitude of young people, separated from family connections, and other influences of home, that should go to bind them to religious Society. And they need to be made more powerfully to feel the attractions of the house of God.

This subject I urge upon your attention, my brethren, because on you depends in a great degree, the character and influence of your future pastor. I have said that pastors, with all their appropriate endowments, are God's gifts. But on this subject as well as on all others, there is a line of coincidence where human and divine influences so meet, that while God is the original author of all, man is an agent in all that is done. As God is the original author of our repentance, while God does not himself repent for us, so God is to be regarded as the original source of all the blessings which you are to enjoy in your future pastor, while to you is left the responsibility of choosing, and to a great degree of forming the character of that pastor. For the influences of pastor and people are reciprocal. And a minister does little more in a course of years towards forming the character of his people, than they do towards forming his character. All the ways in which this is done, the time will not allow me to specify. But some of the ways in which, after the choice of a good pastor, you may contribute to increase his usefulness to you, are obvious. You can give him a liberal support for his family, and thus relieve his mind from those worldly solicitudes, that go to cripple the mind and heart, and thus you may enable him to give himself wholly to mental and moral improvement, and to accumulating resources for your edification. Any parsimony which shall bring you short of this, will be more of an injury to yourselves than to your minister. One of the Christian paradoxes is that a cheap ministry is the most expensive of all. Another way in which the making of the character of your minister rests with you, is that of encouraging him to faithful dealing with you. If you are wont

to resent and repel his faithfulness, he must have a greater share of grace than is usually committed to earthen vessels, not to be eventually discouraged from it. If you are afraid to have him speak out, and rebuke with the boldness of a prophet, the sins of others, the chances are ten to one if you do not bring him to partake of your fears. But on the other hand let him know that you want to hear from him, the whole counsel of God — that you want no trimming, no flattery, no respect of persons from him, and you will be in a way to have none. When he comes to dress your wounds of spirit let him use without flinching of yours, the probe, and the knife if need be, and you will soon procure for yourselves the blessings of a *faithful* ministry. I make not these remarks for the purpose of insinuating that you have been wanting in this particular. For I consider it due to truth for me here to state, though it be at the hazard of being myself regarded as an exception to the principle which I have just advanced, that I have always considered my connection with you as peculiarly favorable in this respect. I know not that I ever stood in this pulpit under the influence of a fear, to utter any rebuke or principle of doctrine which my conscience was convinced ought to be uttered. Or that since I first came upon this ground, I ever felt the force of a temptation to keep back what is profitable, through fear of offending any hearer. And in declaring this item of my experience, I feel that I am bearing the most honorable testimony to the character of this people. And all I can ask in this particular is, that my successor may find it equally easy to be faithful to you in declaring the whole truth.

You may also do much in forming the character, and increasing the usefulness of your minister by active and generous co-operation with him, in every good work. By letting him see that you do not expect him to be your proxy, to do your work, but that the whole church have one interest and one object and one heart with him. But I must omit further particulars here. Suffice it to say that you have great interests and responsibilities touching the character of your future minister, and that the prosperity of this church under God vastly depends on that character. And my heart's desire and prayer to God is that all your wants in this particular may be speedily supplied. Yea, I commend you to God and the word of his grace, fervently desiring that all the influences, and applications of that word, whether in individual and private use, or in the family or in the Sabbath School, or in the house of God, may be more than sustained, and constantly accompanied with the energies of the Holy Ghost.

Another thing nearly connected with a proper regard for the word of God and no less important, towards securing the desired blessing, is a proper *homage to the power and grace of God.* Christian communities, no less than individual hearts, need to be pervaded by a sense of dependence on God for all the blessings connected with gospel ordinances. And this sentiment needs to show itself in a waiting of soul upon God for the desired result, in connection with all means of grace. If God shall see fit to send you a gifted and devoted minister, you will have need to exercise a jealous care over yourselves, lest you forget how it is God alone that can give the increase. Your homage must also be due to the power and grace of God, by being willing to hear and encouraging the preaching of those doctrines of grace which go to humble the pride of man and exalt God in the work of man's salvation. Also in keeping close by the simplicity of the gospel, and repudiating all attempts to make a more efficient gospel than that which was preached by Christ and his apostles. This whole business of experimenting upon Christianity, and laboring to make it more efficient, by grafting upon it the inventions of men, and startling novelties in the manner of exhibiting it, for which the last few years have been distinguished, has grown out of an assumption of a principle, which dethrones the Holy Ghost from his appropriate office. And if this whole business, could be reduced to system, and written in a book, its proper title-page would read — "EVERY MAN HIS OWN SAVIOR". No, my brethren, let it be settled once for all in your minds, that the age of human inventions, the age of steamboats and rail roads, will not bring any improvements to that Gospel, which was published eighteen hundred years ago. And as you value your own spiritual interests, be more careful to keep by the simplicity of revealed truth than to adopt any novelties in doctrines or measures that are urged upon public attention. If any shall say — Lo here is Christ, or lo there, be not in haste to admit pretensions that have not been tested, by the word of God, and by results that time has proved.

Another thing of equal importance is obedience to the commands of God. How beautifully homage to the grace and power of God, was enjoined with obedience to the commands of God in the life of the apostle, Paul must have struck the observation of even superficial readers of his history. His whole life breathes a spirit of self-annihilation. We hear him saying, — I am nothing — So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither is he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. And yet the same time we behold him laboring with a strenuousness, which would become him if a

world's salvation rested on his shoulders alone. Let all the followers of Christ thus practically blend homage to the grace of God with obedience to the commands of God, and objections to the doctrines of grace will have their most efficient refutation. While you hold fast by these doctrines, be careful then to maintain an example which will show that instead of hindering Christian activity, and obedience they give it its most powerful enforcements. Let life and energy pervade individual character, and all your Christian enterprises. Be careful so to shape your enterprises, that all the talent in the church can have employment, and all the piety and activity may have scope.

Let the enterprise for securing a better attendance upon public worship be followed up, till every family and individual be found habitually in the house of God. Complete your good beginnings in the temperance reformation. Here you have done nobly, but you have but just begun. Let not him that putteth on the harness boast as he that layeth it off. From what has been done during the last eight years, learn what the next eight years may do: and then with new courage, go on and do it. And may the Lord crown your efforts with still more glorious success!

And finally let me urge of you to keep the unity of the spirit. Let unity of spirit, sentiment and action be esteemed as of great price. And mark them which cause divisions as unfriendly to your prosperity. Next to purity, union is of the greatest value. First *pure* and then *peaceable*. Let no slight causes disturb that harmony which has so happily characterized the history of this church. Divided in your counsels and feelings, the work of your destruction would be easy, united and animated by the spirit of Christ, no weapon formed against you can prosper. It shall then be the last request, which I have to make of you as a people, and the last advice which as your pastor I shall give, that ye go forward to the work before you with one heart and one soul, striving to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace.

Some of you will recollect that the first sermon which I preached here as your pastor was from this text; 'For what is our joy or crown of rejoicing, are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming. For ye are our glory and our joy.' That sentiment which I then endeavored to illustrate, and adopt as my own, I shall carry with me in my departure from this field. So far as by the grace of God, I have been instrumental in your conversion or instruction, or edification, or in advancing the spiritual interests of this church, so far I shall consider myself as having gained the true

end and reward of my labors. So far I shall consider myself as having left on this ground, the most precious and enduring memorials — not of my own fame, but of the grace of God deigning to work by me. And so far as I have failed of this object, I hope to be able to count my labor lost. And if this has been my main object, while with you, I shall desire the same end, no less when separated from you. And my heart's desire and prayer to God is that my removal from you, may open the way for a greater advancement of your spiritual interests than could have taken place if I had remained with you. And in all the tidings that shall come from you, I shall hope to hear of the triumphs of grce among you. And when I bend the knee before God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, it will be difficult for me to forget the people that has been so long the cherished object of my daily prayers. And while I assure you that I shall not be separated in heart and spirit from you, may I not be also sure, that those who have been wont to pray for my success as their pastor may continue their supplications for me though laboring in another part of the vineyard.

To those of you who have been born into the kingdom of God, through the influence of the truth dispensed by me, I shall ever entertain a peculiar nearness, and hope to stand in near and glorious relations to you in the world to come, where no separations will be known. For though ye may have many instructors in Christ ye have but one father. By the grace of God I have begotten you through the gospel, and by the grace of God, I hope to be able to present you at last before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, saying — Here am I and the children thou hast given me. My parting counsel to you shall be to live as strangers and pilgrims here. Let the disruption of ties that have existed between us, be another means of convincing you, that nought below the sun is abiding. Elevate your aims, and live for God and heaven alone. And in all tidings that reach me from you, nought will give me greater joy than to hear *that my children walk in the truth.* Let me expect this joy from you, and then till we meet again in the upper world, accept my warm FAREWELL.

There is another and more numerous class of my people from whom I part with no less though different concern. It is those on whom I have bestowed labor in vain. There are many old and young, who have heard the same sermons, and had the same means of grace, and lived through the same revivals of religion, by which the others have been brought to repentance, that give no evidence of having been benefitted by my labors; and some at least whom I

must leave with the sad impression that what I have done has been to them a savor of death, unto death. Let such be entreated to regard this occasion as an admonition, that the time is not distant, when they must be separated from all embassadors, proclaiming peace by Jesus Christ, and from all means of grace, and to be prepared to receive into better hearts, the truths which shall be proclaimed by my successor here. All that I can do to persuade you to be reconciled to Christ has been done, and the embassy which I received to you, is now returned as having failed; and I must now and not without sad misgivings, lest the impassable gulf will sink an eternal nonintercourse between us in the future world, pronounce to you my affectionate FAREWELL.

To the youth of this congregation, I would say, in parting, you constitute that portion of this people, on whom my hopes of future usefulness here had been chiefly placed, and it is with no common emotions that I take my leave of you. I have one request to make of you; and that is that after my departure from you, and as you advance in life, and as you spend now and then an hour, in recollecting and thinking of the pastor of your youthful days, you will be particular to call to mind, and consider anew some of the solemn appeals which from this pulpit I have made to your heart and conscience. I wish above all to be remembered by you, as one in earnest beseeching you to be reconciled to Christ. Or rather yield at once to this entreaty, and then if you will, let my name pass forever from your recollections. My heart is full of what I would utter were there time, and were the language of the heart capable of utterance. But should I spend weeks in parting exhortations, and instructions to you, the whole might be condensed in this — Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them. With these words then impressed anew upon your hearts, receive, my young friends, a pastor's FAREWELL.

To the members of the church generally I might address more particular and appropriate remarks, would the time permit. But as the main drift of my discourse has been addressed to you, I will save your time and patience. Peace I leave with you! My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you! Finally brethren, *farewell*, be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

And now to these scenes of so many years' labor, in word and doctrine — scenes of great care and responsibility — scenes of trial and conflict with difficulty — scenes of usefulness in the Lord's work —

scenes of endearment to the Lord's people — scenes of sympathy with you in various joys and sorrows, in various hopes and fears — scenes of fellowship and union with you in God's worship and in sacred ordinances; also to this house of God, which I have helped you to dedicate to his worship, and in which I have seen his stately goings and the image of which will never fade from my mind's eye, and around which my memory will linger as it recounts the memorials of God's kindness, and to all these travelers to eternity, I now give my solemn FAREWELL. The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord cause his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you, and give you peace. AMEN.

(Feb., 1891, 20,000)

BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY.

One volume allowed at a time, and obtained only by card; to be kept 14 days (or seven days in the case of fiction and juvenile books published within one year) without fine; not to be renewed; to be reclaimed by messenger after 21 days, who will collect 20 cents besides fine of 2 cents a day, including Sundays and holidays; not to be lent out of the borrower's household, and not to be transferred; to be returned at this Hall.

Borrowers finding this book mutilated or unwarrantably defaced, are expected to report it; and also any undue delay in the delivery of books.

*** No claim can be established because of the failure of any notice, to or from the Library, through the mail.

The record below must not be made or altered by borrower.